

Developing Catholic Organization to Meet Present Day Needs

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THE development of Catholic organization to meet present day needs is not new. It is a continuous task, one which the Church has undertaken in century after century, and in country after country. In America today, she faces a unique challenge. Any attempt to forecast how she will meet that challenge must call to mind her guiding principles, view her history, study recent trends, and then set all this against a background of the industrial and social conditions now existing in this country.

Charity is individual. Charity is organic. The Church emphasizes the personal obligation contained in the divine words, "By this shall all men know that you are My disciples if you have love one for another."¹ But, in addition, she has always recognized the organic nature of charity as part of her corporate life. As the mystical body of Christ, she has been conscious "that if one member suffer anything all the members suffer with it."² Constantly she urges her children to "be of one mind, having the same charity."³ This unity of thought she would have flower into unanimity of action "with all humility and mildness, with patience supporting one another in charity."⁴

ORGANIZED CHARITY IN THE CHURCH

Here in the new world the Church has been true to her traditions. It is indeed a far cry from the little orphanage established by the Ursulines in New Orleans in 1727, to the 607 Catholic children's homes and agencies which today care for thousands of her children. Glancing at the meager beginning of the Mullanphy Hospital estab-

¹John xiii, 35.

²1 Cor. vii, 26.

³Phil. 2.

⁴Ephes. 2.

lished by the Sisters of Charity in St. Louis in 1828, who could have prophesied that today there would be more than 560 Catholic hospitals in the United States? Little did the founders of the first St. Vincent de Paul Conference in St. Louis in 1845 think that today their society in this country would number 20,000 members and would expend three and one-half million dollars in a single year.

Truly has the Church in America responded to the command of Christ, "So let your light shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father Who is in heaven."⁵ The true spirit of charity is restless. It cannot, in the nature of things, be complacent. If the Charity of Christ presseth us, then it must engender within us what Dr. Kerby has aptly called, "the Passion for Perfection."

Today we look out upon a world disrupted, disordered, and disillusioned, upon multitudes with savings gone, menaced by the specter of hunger, cold and sickness. Today, as in Galilee, the heart of Christ has "compassion on the multitudes."⁶ Once again Christ calls on the members of His mystical body to support one another. Can we allow that call to go unheeded?

THE POPE'S LEADERSHIP

God in His Providence has given us a Pope to whom the whole world turns for inspiration and leadership. His stirring Encyclical "Quadragesimo Anno" has moved the hearts of men as have few documents in history. He searched and found the hidden causes of the present conditions. He saw clearly the need for reconstructing the entire social order. He has boldly enunciated the principles on which such reconstruction must be founded. He calls upon mankind to establish a juridical and social order based on social justice, having for its soul, social charity. Justice and charity, says the Holy Father, working hand in hand, must sternly and uncompromisingly control the headstrong and vehement power of economic supremacy which has wrecked the peace and happiness of the world.⁷

Directed by the words of His Holiness, we assert that

⁵Matt. v, 6.

⁶Matt. xv, 32.

⁷*Quadragesimo Anno*—Barry Vail Edition—page 37.

Catholic charitable organization must have a two-fold objective. First, intelligent and adequate care for those in distress, directed toward restoring self-support wherever possible. Second, positive, definite and concerted action to eliminate the causes of unemployment, sickness, accidents, family dependency and the host of other challenges which we meet in our daily work. These two objectives may be viewed as the remedial and preventive aspects of Catholic organization. We take them up in order.

REMEDIAL ASPECT

The remedial work of the Church in this country until recently has been largely the responsibility of the parish, of religious communities, and of individual groups of the laity. In the last two decades there has been a growing recognition of the need for planning a further development of Catholic charitable work upon a diocesan basis. In diocese after diocese, our Bishops have appointed Diocesan Directors of Charity and have delegated to them varying degrees of authority over the charities of their territory.

1. DIOCESAN PLAN

The orderly development of our charitable work requires continued extension of this diocesan responsibility. Such an extension includes leadership by the Bishop in meeting the charitable needs of his diocese and the integration of the various institutions and agencies already existing. Moreover, diocesan responsibility implies the guiding of future development and extensions according to a well considered plan. I do not for a moment contend that one form of organization for Catholic Charities will fit every diocese. Local conditions, the presence of other private and public agencies, state legislation, and varying Catholic traditions and resources make it essential that each diocesan plan be adjusted to the actual situation within the diocese. Before any plan is determined upon, however, the entire situation should be carefully considered by those equipped with training and experience, the needs and resources carefully charted, objectives agreed upon, and practical steps for their attainment set forth.

It will be found that some functions, particularly those

in the relief of families, may be wisely delegated in whole or in part to the parish and its auxiliaries. Other functions such as those concerned with the care of children, the sick and the aged, transcend parish bounds and extend either to a section or to the whole diocese. Negotiations with city and state authorities and with Community Chests or private organizations, must be conducted by Catholic representatives in the name of the Bishop and must reflect his mind. The coordination and the fostering of these parochial, district and diocesan-wide programs constitute the main work of the central diocesan charities.

In developing and executing a diocesan plan, it is essential that the central diocesan charities be considered as an extension of the diocesan secretariate. The appointment of independent local Catholic representatives in various sections of the diocese to cooperate with neighboring organizations may sometimes work successfully but it may also militate against diocesan unity, and can hardly serve to maintain close contact with the Bishop, from whom authority in the diocese proceeds.

2. PERSONNEL

It seems hardly necessary to say that a Diocesan Director of Charities needs professional training. The Bishop is accustomed to consult with canonists and theologians, with financiers and architects. He is convinced of the necessity for a trained diocesan school superintendent. In the same manner he needs someone who is trained in the administration of social work, who is acquainted with the complexity of laws relating to social welfare, and who is in touch with the civic agencies dealing with these problems.

The successful development of Catholic charities also requires careful preparation and training of the workers in the field. Consciousness of the need for professional standing has been growing among social workers. The movement toward state registration is advancing. Social workers are seeking recognition somewhat similar to that afforded to nurses, doctors and lawyers. The further this movement is carried forward, the more necessary it becomes that Catholic workers be properly trained. Unless the Church keeps in step with it, the separation between charity and social work will grow greater and our Catholic agencies will be

hindered in their participation in public or semi-public funds, in tax support, and in the Community Chests of the country.

The demand for trained service dictates that our religious communities, which operate so many Catholic works, should place new emphasis in their novitiates on training in modern standards and methods of charitable work. If our Catholic women's colleges were to insert in their curriculum, preparatory courses for social work, they would stimulate many recruits for the field. Our Catholic schools of social work are few. We need more. Those we have can render a great service to the Church, if they will only keep their standards high. Catholic charitable work needs leaders. We have many privates now. We need above all, a few who will qualify as staff officers.

In the increasingly important field of public social work, the number of outstanding Catholics is small. Catholic philosophy and Catholic thinking should have greater influence in such public social work. In both public and private agencies, there is need for Catholic leadership. To get leaders, we must have training centers which will properly qualify them. Every Catholic Charities' office should meet the minimum requirements as a training center for field work.

Father LeBuffe, the distinguished Jesuit editor and writer, says: "Social service is reasoned and reasonable charity. That it may be cold and may be inhumanly scientific is admitted. But so may medicine, and so may be the law. That it is frequently unbaptized is also readily granted, but that it is unbaptizable, that it cannot be vivified and ennobled by the sweet flavor of God-inspired love is a distinctly mistaken contention."

So training is required of those who would do the work of the Lord well in the field of charity. For, as Father LeBuffe well puts it "Charity must be reasoned, based on facts, and worked out in terms of all that has been discovered for the relief of human woes."

Let us not wait until there is a frontal attack on the Church, or close our eyes to the daily sniper. Let us hope that the day of meekly following, of having standards of care forced upon us, are over.

Bishop Turner has well said that "science has its place

in religious charitable work and no one deplores it, no one would have it otherwise. We realize that science can be made the handmaid and need not be the mistress in the spirit of charitable work."⁸

3. COOPERATION

The development of Catholic charities according to a diocesan plan and with a proper personnel requires the whole-hearted cooperation of all groups within the diocese. Without common understanding there can be no unanimity of thought or unity of action.

Nowhere is cooperation more necessary or effective than in the financing of our Catholic charitable works—an ever present problem. Where this task is left entirely to the ingenuity of many separate little groups, the difficulty is multiplied. Some sort of universal appeal to every Catholic within the diocese seems essential. If unanimity of thought and action are to be preserved, all the people within the diocese should feel that they are sharing in the Church's work of charity. While the parochial spirit has accomplished great things for the Church, we all know that it has its limitations. At least once during the year, Catholics should be reminded that they have a diocesan charitable responsibility. Diocesan fund raising, properly conducted, results in a growth of diocesan spirit, in a closer drawing together of clergy, Religious, and laity, and in a better understanding of the needs of our people and the vast activities of the Church in the field of charity.

The development of Catholic organization in the remedial field therefore requires the active leadership of the Bishop exerted through a central diocesan office in close touch with all the charities of the diocese. This development calls for a personnel, trained, alert, and loyal to the teaching and traditions of the Church; it demands cooperation among Catholic groups and with all fair-minded non-Catholic groups. It requires the intelligent participation of all the clergy and all the laity. Such development should be positive, not casual; orderly, not haphazard; uniform, not disjointed. So much for the remedial. What about the preventive aspect of the work?

⁸Social Mission of Charity.

PREVENTIVE ASPECT

It is axiomatic that our efforts should extend beyond remedial functions. Here as elsewhere, "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." Many of the difficulties of the poor are due to social, agrarian, and industrial conditions which they cannot control. Wherever possible our leaders should strike at the roots of poverty and distress. The securing of social justice through strong local and national policies of social action is an important objective for Catholic organization.

SOCIAL LEGISLATION

Social legislation is not a panacea for all ills. But when it is wisely drawn and efficiently administered it can do much to further the ends of justice. In the words of His Holiness Pope Leo XIII: "The more that is done for the working population by the general laws of the country, the less need will there be to seek for particular means to relieve them."⁹

The state "is not founded for the purpose of men's merely living together, but for their living as men ought to live."¹⁰ No arguments are needed at a National Conference of Catholic Charities to justify the legislation which has taken so many children out of industry, and which has set up humane children's courts and public departments to deal with their problems in an understanding manner. We all know where Mothers' Aid Laws are properly administered, the great good which accrues to thousands of widows and children. We realize the tremendous amount of distress avoided yearly by the hundred and fifty million dollars distributed under Workmen's Compensation Laws.

Who then should be more interested than we in the promotion of public health and of proper housing? These measures will reduce the costs of relief and of correction. Sickness is at the root of much of our poverty. Congested slum conditions contribute largely to delinquency. If we strike at the roots of these problems we will not only promote the welfare of our fellow citizens, but in the long run save the community greater expense.

⁹*The Condition of Labor*, Paulist Press, page 18.

¹⁰Aristotle, *Politics*, Book 3, Chapter 9.

In these days of rapidly falling wage scales, we cannot overlook the plea of His Holiness Pope Pius XI, that all fathers of families receive a wage sufficient to meet adequately ordinary domestic needs. The Pope's words are strong, "Intolerable," he says, "and to be opposed with all our strength, is the abuse whereby mothers of families, because of the insufficiency of the father's salary are forced to engage in gainful occupations outside domestic walls to the neglect of their own proper cares and duties, particularly the education of their children."¹¹ The Church through her Bishops has declared in favor of legislation to effect a decent minimum wage scale as follows: "The several states should enact laws providing for the establishment of wage rates that will be at least sufficient for the decent maintenance of a family, in the case of all male adults, and adequate for the decent individual support of female workers."¹² I quote from the program for social reconstruction.

Neither is there any mincing of words in the statement of the Bishops' program on the important question of social insurance: "The state should make comprehensive provision for insurance against illness, invalidity, unemployment, and old age."¹³ To date seventeen of our states have written into their statute books an old age security act. On the other hand, only one state, Wisconsin, has demanded that industry should supply compulsory unemployment insurance.

PROCEDURE OUTLINED

If Catholic organization is to be effective in the field of prevention we must see clearly and teach unremittingly the obligations of the community by reason of these principles of social justice. Our Holy Father has set forth two fundamental steps which must be taken:

1. Preparation of our priests to take an active part in social reform. His words are clear: "No easy task is here imposed upon the clergy, wherefore all candidates for the sacred priesthood must be adequately prepared to meet it by intense study of social matters."¹⁴

¹¹*Quadragesimo Anno*, page 30.

¹²Bishops' Program of Reconstruction.

¹⁴*Quadragesimo Anno*, page 58.

¹³*Ibid.*

2. Preparing our Catholic laity to apply the principles of Catholic teaching. In this connection His Holiness says: "In order to bring back to Christ these whole classes of men who have denied Him, we must gather and train lay apostles, amongst working men and amongst employers."¹⁵

Some promising steps have already been taken. The holding of regional meetings of the Catholic Conference on Industrial Affairs in various parts of the country should serve to arouse the interest of our people. The College Department of the National Catholic Educational Association has recently sent to 163 Catholic colleges and universities a "Syllabus on Social Problems in the Light of Christian Principles," which carries with it a resolution adopted at its meeting in Cincinnati last June to the effect that "colleges be urged to encourage those students who have not had a course in social problems, to take such a course if possible during the coming school year."¹⁶ It further recommends that such a course be made a requisite for a bachelor's degree.

The diocesan director of charities should keep closely in touch with the social legislation which is being proposed in his state and community. In many dioceses he can recruit and guide the efforts of forceful members of the laity who will be interested in this work. Here again it will be necessary to cooperate with groups which are outside the Church. As citizens our obligation is to the entire social body. Our striving for social justice must be integrated with similar efforts on the part of our fellow citizens who are of a different faith. Prudence dictates that there are limits to such cooperation, but good-will and devotion to a common cause demand that we work hand in hand with all who are sincerely striving for sound measures of social, agrarian, and industrial reform.

OUTLOOK FOR THE FUTURE

What of the outlook for the future? There are those in this country who believe the amelioration of present evils can be accomplished only by revolution. This method is contrary to our American way of doing things. Our faith counsels sane, orderly processes of reconstruction. Yet we

¹⁵*Ibid.*, page 58.

¹⁶*The Catholic News*, August 20, 1932.

must face the facts. So far we have had in this greatest of depressions, an acceptance of conditions by men who have lost their jobs through the operation of policies that were to abolish poverty. Ten million and more unemployed have been quiet because they have been fed, clothed, and sheltered—not very well, but after a fashion. Let us not be deluded by this apparent complacency. Reorganization and reconstruction are necessary.

Our Holy Father has laid down an exceptionally broad and fearless program to guide legislative and voluntary action looking toward better conditions for both capital and labor. Trite as the statement is, the only sound remedy for unemployment is employment. Inordinate greed and huge profits during one turn of the economic wheel and appalling conditions of unemployment affecting millions during another, must come to an end. The intolerable effects of widespread unemployment must be planned against—first, through the recognition on the part of employers and employees of their mutual interdependence, the realization that disaster to one means catastrophe to the other; second, the acceptance of the fact that as long as the farm industry of our country is sick, just so long will the economic recovery of our workers in the cities be delayed; third, through the adoption of the principle that a healthy, decent, normal standard of living cannot be based on economic law solely, but must bring into it, God's eternal principles of justice and charity.

What part will Catholic leadership play in this all important crisis? Looking back over the history of the Church in America we have reason for hope. Great things have already been accomplished by the development of Catholic organizations which are daily fulfilling the commandment of love. This has been done while the Church has been under a severe strain to erect churches, schools and colleges. In large measure it has been done by Catholics endowed with little of this world's goods. Today in many parts of the country members of our faith have risen to positions of prominence and the Church enjoys a security and a prestige far beyond what it had in earlier decades. The time has arrived when her social mission can be more adequately fulfilled. If we can but marshal our resources, if we can but rally our Catholic people under the leadership

and inspiration given by His Holiness, a new era is at hand.

With the watchwords justice and charity ever in mind, spurred on by divine faith and unwavering patriotism, Catholic charitable organization in America can become a mighty force in both remedial and preventive action for the welfare of all the people.

The Value of the Volunteer Worker

REVEREND FRANCIS P. LeBUFFE, S.J.

An address delivered at the 1925 meeting of the National Conference of Catholic Charities.

BEFORE I begin speaking at all, I want to say that I am speaking, as we say in philosophy, in an affirmative sense. What I say about the volunteer worker is in affirmation of the volunteer worker, without any reflection on the non-volunteer or paid worker, who is imperatively needed, and without whom we cannot do these days. In fact we need trained paid workers now, and we must have them, if we want our Catholic institutions and agencies to do proper work. I stress this because, as most of you know, there has already been trouble on this question. I am making an affirmation in regard to the value of the volunteer worker, without casting any aspersion on, or making any comparison with, the paid worker, especially in any way in which the paid worker would be injured. . . .

With this preface, let us enter upon our subject-matter proper. Do we need, first of all, the volunteer worker? In other words, can we meet the need that there is amongst Catholics unless we do have volunteer workers? The answer is very clear. If you go to any of the yearly meetings, for instance of the N. C. C. W., either in national or diocesan conferences, or the annual convention of the Ladies of Charity in a great city like New York, or any in the smaller cities, you hear of the hundreds of thousands of hours spent by those good women in reaching down into the

hovels of the great cities, in going into the hospitals and bringing a word of cheer and comfort to the sick. You will know then, if you did not know it before, that it would be absolutely impossible for us to do anything like the great relief work we are doing, unless we had volunteer workers.

DUTY TO OUR NEIGHBOR

Not only is there a need for volunteer workers, but there is a duty upon the part of all of us to do something for our neighbor. We have the corporal works of mercy, and they are not out of date; they are as obligatory upon us as they were in the early ages of the Church and much more so in these times of a very complex civilization. You and I have a duty incumbent upon us to give succor to our neighbor, whether we do it as volunteer or as paid social workers. Most of us must give it as volunteer workers: first of all because we cannot give ourselves to the work as paid workers; and again because the profession could not take care of all of us as paid workers.

Now, how can we use the volunteer worker? Again let me say that I am speaking in an affirmative sense without comparison. How can we use the volunteer worker? Let us begin to make distinctions at once. We may have a volunteer worker with money, and of course, if he or she wants to give it, hundreds of dollars or thousands of dollars, or if one in a spirit of generosity wishes to give, say, her country home as a place for poor girls, no one will ever say there is no room for that kind of volunteer worker.

Secondly, we have volunteers who contribute personal service. They may have money, or they may have nothing but the God-given powers of soul and body to contribute in service to their fellowmen. Here again we have further distinctions to make. You may have a volunteer who is willing to give personal service, but will give it spasmodically. The spasmodic worker is a worker of very little use, because she will come today and maybe tomorrow, and then after a few days she is done. But if you think clearly, you will see that the trouble with such a worker is not that she is a volunteer but that she is spasmodic. Therefore, we must not blame her volunteering, but we must blame her emotional instability, which would be present if she were even a paid worker, and which would show

itself in any other field whatsoever, because she is the creature of impulses.

THE TRAINED VOLUNTEER WORKER

But suppose you get a steady volunteer worker. Again we ask is that steady worker trained or untrained? If the volunteer worker is trained, no one can make any objection to a steady, trained volunteer worker. By "trained" I mean of course, one who is trained in a school of social service or any school of sociology. But suppose the volunteer worker, though steady, is untrained; suppose we get one who is untrained both in the technical school and untrained in the great university of experience? Suppose one comes along young and immature and wants to do volunteer work, what are we to do? Take such a volunteer, watch such a volunteer, see that such a volunteer does not handle problems which are above her, test her out and see whether she has the maturity fit for such problems. Such a worker must not be turned out into the fields that are beyond her; but at the same time that desire to work for others must not be crushed within her, because it may be that she will in time be one of the outstanding social workers of her day.

But suppose we have a worker or a person who is untrained in the technical schools, but has had many courses in the great university of experience wherein we Catholics have learned with Christ as the dean. We cannot turn such persons away. We may and should use such persons, for they bring with them a certain vivacity and a certain newness of outlook, a certain definite approach to the problem which at times is liable to become colorless for those of us who make the work their vocation. We all know how that is. Most of us have side lines of work in which we are interested. In our tired moments we will turn to that side line in preference to our main line of work, because the daily drudgery of our vocation wants a surcease; we need and want a change. That is no reflection on our daily work, but it does mean that our hearts and our minds demand a change.

WORKERS WITH WORTHWHILE CONTACTS

I think there is a great deal to be said on this point.

I have some ladies now in mind, mothers of families, whose children no longer need their immediate care. If you take a steady worker who has had years of experience in bringing up a family, it certainly would seem strange to us that such a woman skilled in bringing up her children as a true Catholic mother, is not preeminently fit to go out now and tell the under-privileged mother—if we may so name her—tell her how she may bring up her children in the love of God. Or shall we say that this good mother who has unfolded her own little ones and brought them nearer to God, may not go out and put her arms lovingly around a little girl that is beginning to go astray.

A third class of steady workers are those not necessarily wealthy, but of sufficient social position; those who have worthwhile contacts of which use can be made. When there is question of relieving those in need, such a person is well worth while. When we have a case that must be hurried and we desire a definite avenue of approach which can be reached by a definite woman who has the entree, it is well worth while to have someone of that sort to whom we can appeal that she may ask for a favor for the sake of this boy or girl whose outstanding need is to have this thing done at once and done well. Thus if a volunteer worker is in a social position that gives an ample opportunity of tying up, as we say, with the higher authorities in any agency, such a worker can be of tremendous aid.

One other aspect of the volunteer worker is this. It is a fact that some few people will not confide in the paid social worker. This is no reflection on those that are in the work as a specific life work. You have often heard the story told of the woman who when the social worker comes to her and asks for the privilege of helping her, will look at her and say: "Are you one of those women that are making their livelihood out of the likes of me?" You may have come across such types of women who will not give their confidence to anyone who is receiving money because of services rendered to them in their poverty. I do not say that that attitude of mind is correct. I do not approve of it; but when you are dealing with human beings, take them as they are and you may cure them. If you do not take them as they are, you will never cure them.

SOME OF THE OBJECTIONS

Now for a few objections. One is that the volunteer worker is not capable of acts of self-sacrifice. Now, that is wrong. I want to mention rapidly just a few instances that I know of personally, without mentioning names, where acts of self-sacrifice have been made.

Do you call this a spirit of self-sacrifice when a Catholic Big Sister, a volunteer, will take three years of law and get a bachelor's degree simply to be a better Big Sister? For three years she went her way daily into the children's court and then into the law classes without at times even having had chance for luncheon. Do you call it a spirit of self-sacrifice when two ladies of means, volunteer workers again, will take a girl and her two illegitimate children and stay for three hours in a rectory waiting for their friend, a priest, to come back and have the children baptized? Do you call it a spirit of self-sacrifice when a lady of leisure will leave her home in the wee hours of the morning, and rush down to another woman to listen to her story of a broken heart, and try to give that soul courage again? Is that self-sacrifice? That is self-sacrifice, and it is wrong to say that the volunteer is not capable of it.

OF COURSE, MISTAKES ARE MADE

Secondly, it is said that the volunteer worker makes mistakes. Well, only dead men make no mistakes. And only people who do nothing make no mistakes except the great mistake of doing nothing. We all make mistakes. The paid social worker makes mistakes and some bad ones; and the volunteer worker makes mistakes and some bad ones. Indeed, the more we deal with people, the more we feel we must hang our heads with shame for the mistakes we make. When we do succeed, it is with the grace of God. The answer is for all of us to cultivate prudence, the greatest of the virtues, and also to develop the ability to doubt. If a social worker, paid or unpaid, volunteer, trained or untrained, has not the ability to doubt, she is TNT in the social service work, and she is going to wreck many lives.

Finally, what is the history of social service in the Church except the history of the volunteer service? If you go back to your New Testament, you will find the first social service work done in the New Testament was done by

the deacons, one of the purposes of whose consecration was to give relief to the needy and the hungry of the early Church. You know the beautiful story of Dorcas, otherwise known as Tabitha, for you have the story told in the New Testament. I will read it. There are only five verses, and we can not compete with the language of the Scripture. (Acts ix, 36-40):

"And in Joppe there was a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did.

"And it came to pass in those days that she was sick and died. Whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber.

"And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppe, the disciples hearing that Peter was there, sent unto him two men, desiring him that he would not be slack to come unto them.

"And Peter rising up, went with them. And when he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber. And all the widows stood about him weeping, and shewing him the coats and garments which Dorcas made them.

"And they all being put forth, Peter kneeling down prayed, and turning to the body, he said: Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes; and seeing Peter, she sat up."

THE SAINTS AS EXAMPLES

Dorcas never took a course in training, except in the university of experience, with Our Lord as dean. Come down the centuries to the time of St. Francis of Assisi for an example of training. Was he not a valiant worker? And as Chesterton says so well in his "Life of St. Francis of Assisi" that when he kissed the leper on the road, he changed the history of Europe. And did St. Peter Claver have training? St. Peter, the man who brought salvation both of soul and body to the poor Negro slaves brought out from Africa down to the shores of South America, the man who would go down to docks of Carthagina, take care of the poor slaves spiritually and physically, and cover them with his own robe, which miraculously gave out a sweet odor, though it had clothed the foulness of their bodies. Or did St. Vincent de Paul ever have training?

Therefore, let us, as Catholics, remember that we need in social service work both the trained and the untrained

worker. We need the trained worker (need him or her very badly, as we have said before) especially in organization work. We need the trained worker in the positions of authority in the actually functioning agencies of our work, so that those of us who are volunteers may be guided aright; that we may know what we should do; that we may go to them in doubt, even as they, in their doubts, have to go to older and wiser heads. There is then no contradiction between insisting upon the training of workers and also emphasizing the tremendous field for the untrained worker. It is a splendid thing if you can make the volunteer worker take a course of a few lectures at least that she may know the agencies that are at hand and know where she can go to gain this bit of relief, and where she can go to gain this other kind of relief; where she must take children with this disease, where she may place this other type of ill-health.

DUTY TO BE VOLUNTEER WORKERS

Remember this, that while there is urgent need for trained workers we need volunteer workers, that we have a duty to become volunteer workers, that there is a great field for volunteer workers. And remember that the spirit of Christ alive in our hearts is the ultimate thing that we need. That is the source from which all our energies must flow.

I am sure if we make the proper distinction, that we can all agree that the volunteer worker has a distinct place in our social service program; that without the volunteer worker we could not do a fraction of the work that we ought to do. And then it is that we shall fulfil the command of St. Paul that he gave, remember, not to priests, not to rulers, but to the ordinary workmen of Philippi, the ordinary men and women of Corinth, telling them that they were to look not to the things that were their own, but be anxious for those that belonged to others; and show mercy one to another. That is the task of the volunteer worker. God grant that today we have other St. Francis Assisis, other Peter Clavers, and other St. Vincent de Pauls, who were educated in the university of experience, with Christ as Dean.

Pagan Catholics and Social Justice

REVEREND C. C. MARTINDALE, S.J.

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I ASKED last week whether Catholics can be "paganized," and said that it was certainly possible to take a paganized view of history, and that it was a pity if Catholics took no view of history.

We now come to the extreme opposite end, and ask whether Catholics can take a pagan view, or quite possibly no view, of concrete material conditions of life. And, by a paradox, what I want to recommend is not rarely spoken of as itself pagan; what I deprecate as "spiritual." I can put this in a sentence. We all know the Catholic medical work initiated by Dr. Agnes Maclaren, which is now domiciled at Washington, D. C., and which has just at the time of writing opened a house in England. A representative of this work was not long ago at a great Catholic assembly. She was wounded to the heart by a priest's saying to her: "But isn't medical work such as you do—just Protestant?"

All the same, there is no reason to suppose that our Lord, when bidding us to visit the sick or prisoners, and attaching eternal issues to our doing so, was speaking allegorically. He meant real sick persons, real prisoners. Moreover, it is bad psychology to divide soul and body as with an axe. "Man" is body-soul. It is, finally, bad policy. I had occasion recently to ask—shall we say, for the sake of a name, a "Catholic Soldiers' Association." I wanted a job for a young man just leaving the army. On his getting one depended the general serenity of his life, and also his marriage. I was told: "We do not look for jobs." "What do you do?" "We try to encourage men to frequent the Sacraments." I said: "When you say to the average ex-soldier, desperate for food and clothing: 'We cannot find these for you, but we hope you will go to Communion—we do ourselves!' he will say: 'Thank you; I'll

apply elsewhere.' He does so; and if he gets his job from the Salvation Army or Y. M. C. A., *there* will remain his gratitude and allegiance. You simply cannot salve conscience by saying: 'He was a slack Catholic; he was merely out for the fleshpots.'"

But the situation is not merely one of individuals to be found jobs for. Modern society is a *sinful* society. That masses of men should not have enough to eat or be disgustingly housed, while others possess huge fortunes, is *sinful*. It is a coagulated injustice, a social and collective sin. I want to insist—not just sad, but sinful. Now where there is sin, there is responsibility. And a Catholic may, without knowing it, be taking just the same attitude towards this collective sin as those do who don't care a snap of the fingers whether it is sinful or not. To allow sin serenely to continue is not palliated by giving alms which mitigate an infinitesimal part of the results of the aboriginal unregarded sin.

And if people say: "Well, but what can *I* do? I cannot alter the whole structure of society," the answer is, (a) a few determined individuals *can* alter the current of public opinion, and thereby the structure of society—no revolution has ever been carried through by a majority, but by a handful of determined men, especially when the majority was apathetic or despondent. And (b) we have no right to throw responsibility off on to general conditions and abstractions till we are sure that the individual can do nothing at all. But ten to one he can do much. . . .

Our Lord made things very difficult for us when He said: "By their fruits ye shall know them"; because again we have no right to suppose that He meant *only* interior virtues. And we make things difficult for ourselves if we almost teach, sometimes, that because the Church does not issue statements about the iniquity of this or that concrete fact but keeps to general principles, therefore we, out of prudence, ought to. Here, were one to denounce the behavior of this or that landlord by name, one would be up for libel; and if he were also the owner of a great group of papers, there would be no faintest chance of justice or even publicity. Everyone knows of editorial blacklists! So I suppose one needs even one or two Catholic magnates to take their position to heart; and if that is difficult to do

when one is adult and involved in an actual situation, we need to educate those who *will* be magnates to arrive at their great position resolved to act upon principles clearly put to them and assimilated in youth.

But perhaps the real hope is, not in the magnate present or future, but in the solid Catholic opinion and determination of a few ordinary young men and women who shall really study some concrete object along with their theories. Again I appeal for more use of the imagination, a faculty that we almost deride in our zeal for clear thinking. We do not picture the "dreadful" things.

Put a silk shirt over the ulcer; sniff *eau de cologne* if, in spite of the shirt, it stinks . . . and you can get on without worrying till the ulcer gnaws too deep, and then. . . . I would want all our Catholic schools and other groups to try to see, and to know, the injustices of life; to try positively, not just to deplore even sincerely, what is so bad. After going with me to one such place, a young man said: "I simply shan't be able to swallow my dinner tonight." Good for him. It did indeed stick in his spiritual gullet; and today he works hard.

But again and again, it is not because it is dreadful, but because it is sinful, that we Catholics, who have no stronger word in the world than sin, must take up a strong attitude towards such matters, and show strength in the individual instance. When I talk about seamen, and the deplorable insufficiency of decent Catholic work done for them even now, people always say: "How dreadful to think of men living like that." This almost exasperates me. I can think of much worse lives than a stoker's, "black peak" and all. I recall an acquaintance of mine, in a great city, who was implored by the paid partner of his sin to put in a good word for her to the woman who employed her. "I simply dare not risk losing this job," said the unhappy girl, round whom rags of respectability and the terror of starvation still were hanging: "Madame's waiting list is enormous." You may almost say that the girl exhausted in herself the dreadfulness—the substance of the sin lay elsewhere.

We dare not tolerate, let alone create, the remote preparation for, if not the practical necessity of, a choice between sin and starving. If *their* lives are like that, is *our* conscience clean?